

SOLDIERS' SONGS: THE FOLKLORE OF THE POWERLESS

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A later version of this paper was published in *New York Folklore* 11 (1985)

Introduction

As occupational folklore, the songs that soldiers sing serve many purposes. They enhance the solidarity of groups, strengthen morale and help diminish fear, while as varieties of simple, expressive, frontier-style, self-entertainment they help reduce the boredom, frustration and monotony of much military life. However, what, in this article concentrates on what, in a democracy, is perhaps their most important function. This is to act as an informal channel of protest against circumstance and against oppressive, incompetent, unpopular or overbearing military and political authority.

Literature, and particularly poetry, offers strategies for dealing with the human situation.¹ The songs, recitations and folklore of soldiers² are the poetry of the powerless. They are the only means at their disposal for the expression of their subversive fears and frustrations. Men living under close military discipline are in much the same predicament as the citizens of any absolutist regime. They cannot openly challenge its legitimacy, nor can they freely express their discontent and anger at their fate. Only in ribald song and lewd fantasy can the truth is permitted a momentary exposure. Comedy, especially in its ironic forms, institutionalises doubts and questionings by allowing a degree of furtive, half-serious, ambiguous expression. It is a variety of sanctioned disrespect³, which permits them to endure and even to mock at what they cannot change. A comic style also asserts "the vital rhythm of self-preservation"⁴ because the fear of death can be acknowledged more openly without shame or embarrassment in the guise of laughter and may even be temporarily overcome. Thus to sing a chorus of "I Don't Want to be a Soldier" is to take a small step toward the control of that fear.

Folksong as Comic Protest

This song is a comic protest against the hazards of life at the front. It maintained its currency in the British Army from the time of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵

I don't want the Sergeant's shilling,⁶
I don't want to be shot down;
I'm really much more willing
To make myself a killing,
Living off the pickings of the Ladies of the Town;
Don't want a bullet up my bumhole,
Don't want my cobblers minced with ball;⁷
For if I have to lose 'em
Then let it be with Susan
Or Meg or Peg or any whore at all,

Gorblimey!

On Monday I touched her on the ankle,

On Tuesday I touched her on the knee;
 On Wednesday such caresses
 As I got inside her dresses,
 On Thursday she was moaning sweetly;
 On Friday I had my fingers in it,
 On Saturday she gave my balls a wrench;
 And on Sunday after supper,
 I had the fucker up her,
 And now she's got me up before the Bench,

Gorblimey!

The following version was circulating among British and Commonwealth troops in World War 2. A variant of it was also current among elements of the U.S. Marine Corps stationed in the Pacific.⁸

I don't want to be a soldier,
 I don't want to go to war;
 I'd rather hang around
 Piccadilly underground,
 Living on the earnings of a high born lady;
 Don't want a bullet up my arsehole,
 Don't want my bollocks shot away,
 For I'd rather stay in England,
 Merry, merry England,
 And roger all my bleeding life away,

Gorblimey!

Numerous versions of this, which circulated among U.S. troops serving in Europe in World War 2, were known as the "Piccadilly Song" or as "Gorblimey". One of them was still current during the Vietnam War.⁹

Another protest song that had universal currency among British and Commonwealth troops in World War 2 was "Fuck 'em All". This was popular among Royal Air Force personnel in the 1920's on the North West Frontier of India and may have originated there. It was adapted and popularized commercially by singers like Gracie Fields under the bowdlerized title of "Bless 'em All" so that in its officially sponsored form it functioned as a patriotic item of light entertainment. At the same time, versions of its folk original continued to be sung as an expression of protest by the soldiery. The text reproduced here was current in 2NZEF throughout World War 2.

Oh they say there's a troopship just leaving Bombay¹⁰
 Bound for old Blighty's shore,¹¹
 Heavily laden with time-expired men
 Bound for the land they adore;
 There's many a twat¹² just finishing his time,
 There's many a cunt signing on;
 You'll get no promotion this side of the ocean,
 So cheer up my lads, fuck 'em all!

Chorus: Fuck 'em all!
 Fuck 'em all!
 The long and the short and the tall;

Fuck all the Sergeants and W.O.I.'s,¹³
 Fuck all the corporals and their bastard sons;¹⁴
 For we're saying goodbye to them all,
 As up the C.O.'s arse they crawl;¹⁵
 You'll get no promotion this side of the ocean,
 So cheer up my lads, fuck 'em all!

The Fleet Air Arm of the British Royal Navy had its own version, as did the U.S. Army Air Force both in World War 2 and in the Korean War.¹⁶ Numerous adaptations circulated in the Pacific theatre, including the following.¹⁷

They called for the army to come to Tulagi,¹⁸
 But Douglas MacArthur¹⁹ said no;
 They said there's a reason,
 It isn't the season,
 Besides there's no USO.²⁰

Chorus: Fuck 'em all! Fuck 'em all!
 The long, the short, the tall;
 Fuck all the Pelicans and Dogfaces too,²¹
 Fuck all the generals and above all fuck you!
 So we're saying goodbye to them all,
 As back to our foxholes we crawl;
 There'll be no promotion on MacArthur's blue ocean,
 So cheer up Gyrenes, fuck 'em all.

Two additional verses circulating in the Marine Corps were:²²

They sent for the Navy to come to Tulagi,
 The gallant Navy agreed;
 With one thousand sections
 In different directions,
 My God! What a fucked-up stampede!

Chorus: Fuck 'em all, etc.

They sent for the nurses to come overseas,
 The reason was perfectly clear,
 To make a good marriage and push a carriage
 While fucking all hands, my dear!

Chorus: Fuck 'em all, etc.

Finally a version collected from a G.I. returning from Germany.²³

Just think of the boys at the front,
 No beer, no whisky, no cunt;
 They sit in their trenches
 And think of their wenches,
 So cheer up, my boys, fuck 'em all! etc.

The most celebrated example of the trans-national proliferation of a wartime song is the German popular success, "Lili Marlene". This was listened to, played and sung in various languages by the German, British and U.S. contestants in World War 2 in Europe and its melody was used as the vehicle for an extensive family of parodies, adaptations and improvisations. For instance, a commentary on the predicament of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern front entitled "In Dem Western Moskaus" ("To the West of Moscow"), likened the fate of Adolf Hitler to that of Napoleon before him. At least one obscene version, in which the singer imagined himself having sexual intercourse with Lili, circulated among German Afrika Korps troops in the Middle East. British Eighth Army soldiers fighting on the Italian Front borrowed the tune to compose a bitter complaint about being called "D-Day Dodgers". New Zealand troops fighting in Italy used it to demand that their Prime Minister should have them returned to their homeland. Americans awaiting repatriation in the Fifth Army in 1945 directed a similar appeal for deliverance to President Truman.²⁴

Please Mr. Truman, let the boys go home,
 We have conquered Naples and liberated Rome;
 We have subdued the Master Race,
 There are no Krauts for us to face;
 Oh please let us go home,
 Let the boys at home see Rome, etc.

Folklore and the Military Environment

These texts demonstrate the continuity of particular folksongs across time in an environment especially suited to their oral transmission. Notwithstanding all the benefits of official programmes of sport, recreation and welfare, troops' entertainments in the field at the unit level in World War 2 depended greatly on the impromptu talents of individuals who acted as linkages for the oral transmission of a traditional store of folklore. Songs that were current among British and Commonwealth troops like "O'Reilly's Daughters", "Samuel Hall", "The Soldier's Prayer", "The Lousy Lance-Corporal", "The Foreskin Fusiliers", "Fred Karno's Army" and "Fuck 'em All" were derived from the oral sub-culture of the professional pre-World War 2 army. A variety of obscene compositions like "Abdullah Bulbul Emir", "The Ball o'Kirriemoir", "Eskimo Nell", "In Mobile", "The Good Ship Venus" and "The Winnipeg Whore" came from the common legacy of folk utterance current in British-speaking countries in the 1930's. In the military sphere it found a perfect field of uninhibited amplification. The performers of such songs had the same function as the narrators of folk tales. They do not necessarily originate their subject matter, they learn it from some convenient source and subsequently give performances themselves, perhaps changing and enriching its content and certainly interpreting it. In the case of the folk singer this requires a keen memory, the ability to play a musical instrument and perhaps to sing tunefully.

Performance was highly informal and was often accompanied by the consumption of liquor at unit or sub-unit gatherings where people mingled, exchanged anecdotes, renewed friendships, sang choruses and indulged in crude horseplay. The circumstances of wartime services life favour the emergence of folk narrators and entertainers working within a tradition that depends on such talents and such a milieu. The men who sang the songs cited in this study did so without much reliance on published sources. They learned their words by listening to the performances of others, or they relied on hand-written copies of lyrics made by their originators or by those in the originators' audiences,²⁵ and they made use of simple, well-known tunes that could be remembered easily and which did not require any special musical skill to reproduce. They were dependent on the spoken word because they had virtually no access to print media; there were no transistorized radios or portable record players; they were temporarily obliged to live closely together in isolated communities; and though much of what they sang was abrasive, comic and crudely demotic, it was tolerated and uncensored. The chief locale for these activities was the training camp, the troopship or the unit billet or bivouac behind the lines, but this did not impose any limitations on the spread of material from one formation to another, from one generation to another, and even from one country to another.

Folksong as Secular Prayer

Some soldiers' songs can be seen as a kind of secular prayer because they either convey a plea for salvation from distress or they make use of well-known hymn tunes like "The Church's One Foundation", "Holy, Holy, Holy" and "Onward Christian Soldiers" that were a familiar part of the popular culture of the British homeland. In 1914 this was still embedded in an active tradition of Christian worship and a 19th century evangelical movement that was not only a source of inspiration to believers, but also offered comfort to the downtrodden and oppressed. Thus British soldiers in World War 1 were singing songs like "When this Bloody War is Over" (to the tune of "Take it to the Lord in Prayer"), "Raining, Raining, Raining" ("Holy, Holy, Holy") and "We've Had no Beer" ("Lead Kindly Light"). In modern times the tradition of religious worship may have lost much of its widespread currency, though, interestingly, a popular refrain among U.S. troops in Vietnam used the tune of a Negro Spiritual "All My Trials, Lord, Soon be Over" as the performers counted the days before they might rotate home, or become casualties. Certainly among British and Commonwealth soldiers in World War 2 a repertoire of hymns like "He Careth for Me" and "When the Roll is Called up Yonder" were a regular part of the brief interdenominational services that were held by the Salvation Army and YMCA and were enjoyed as part of the social life of most military camps. This is not to deny that some soldiers may have been sustained by a personal religious faith, but the majority would never publicly or in any way openly express themselves in formal prayer. Yet many ribald parodies contain direct echoes of this tradition of Christian prayer and belief in the possibility of deliverance from danger and evil. As songs rather than mundane words they signalled a degree of reassurance and even affirmation when confronted by experiences and terrors for which no official explanation seemed adequate. Hymn tunes were thus a cultural vehicle for the long and deadly struggle to survive of the ordinary soldier.

So, "The Soldier's Prayer" has been a traditional part of the repertoire of the rank and-file British soldier for at least 100 years. Although it contains blasphemous sentiment it is essentially an appeal for deliverance from over-bearing and hated authority. The combined-operations basis involving a soldier and a sailor, and the abusive reference to "our Queen" suggest Victorian origins, perhaps during the Crimea campaign. However, it was still being sung in this form in 2NZEF in 1943.

Oh a soldier and a sailor were talking one day;
Said the soldier to the sailor let us kneel down and pray,
And for each thing we pray for may we also have ten,
And at the end of every chorus we will both sing, Amen!

Now the first thing we'll pray for, we'll pray for some beer,
And if we only get some it will bring us good cheer,
And if we have one beer may we also have ten;
May we have a fucking brewery, said the sailor, Amen!

Now the next thing we'll pray for, we'll pray for some cunt.
And if we only get some it will make us all grunt,
And if we have one cunt may we also have ten,
May we have a fucking knockshop, said the sailor, Amen!

Now the next thing we'll pray for, we'll pray for our Queen,
To us a bloody old bastard she's been,
And if she has one son, may she also have ten,
May she have a bloody regiment, said the sailor, Amen!

Now all you young officers and NCOs too,
With your hands in your pockets and fuck-all to do,
When you stand on street corners abusing us men,

May the Lord come down and fuck you all, said the sailor, Amen!

Strategic Cursing, Insult and Obscenity

The singing of such songs, particularly when they are directed against specific targets, may be regarded as a demonstration of traditional liberties of criticism and insult, exemplified in Roman times in the form of satirical songs against Julius Caesar by his soldiers who accused him of "having fed them nothing but cabbages".²⁶ The complaints about food, common to all armies, are a perpetuation of this tradition. The presentation of one's unit as a band of ignominious, self-seeking cowards rather than as valiant, battlefield heroes, is a self-inflicted insult as well as a comic demolition of the entire military enterprise. Thus "Fred Karno's Army" was sung to the tune of "The Church's One Foundation" by British and Commonwealth troops in both world wars. Karno was an English music hall comedian during World War 1 who specialized in the portrayal of comic inefficiency. In World War 2 versions, the Kaiser is replaced by "Old Hitler"

We are Fred Karno's army,
The ragtime infantry,
We cannot fight, we cannot shoot,
No bloody use are we;
But when we get to Berlin
The Kaiser he will say,
Hoch! Hoch! Mein Gott!
What a bloody fine lot, The ragtime infantry.

Another unheroic caricature of military life called "The Foreskin Fusiliers" could be heard among British troops in World War 2.

Eyes right!
Buttons bright!
Bayonets to the rear!
We're the boys who make no noise,²⁷
We're always full of beer;
We're the heroes of the night
And we'd rather fuck than fight,
We're the heroes of the Foreskin Fusiliers.²⁸

A formidable enemy can be psychologically diminished by investing it with ludicrous and demeaning imagery. Throughout World War 2, British and commonwealth troops sang to the tune of "Colonel Bogey" a marching song which alleged that the Nazi leadership was sexually abnormal.

Hitler has only got one ball,²⁹
Goering has got none at all,
Himmler has something similar,
But poor old Goebbels has no balls at all.

The following doggerel verse, collected from 2NZEF servicemen in 1940, is another example of strategic cursing and insult directed at an enemy. Originally entitled "Kaiser Wilhelm, Son of Satan" and of World War 1 origins,³⁰ it contains a number of Australian slang expressions and has similarities to the Australian folk recitation "The Bastard from the Bush". This was current in New Zealand in the 1930's as part of a common store of Australasian folk culture that included such obscene classics as "The Ring Dang Doo", "The Old Red Flannel Drawers that Maggie Wore" and a bawdy version of "The Road to Gundagai".

Adolph Hitler, son of Satan, may bad luck fall on you,
 May ills and chills beset you, may your testicles turn blue,
 May you have to hump your bluey³¹ and be forced to take a job
 Of skinning cancered jumbucks³² at a wage of seven bob;³³
 May itching penis torment you, may corns grow on your feet,
 And crabs as big as spiders attack your balls a treat;
 And when at last you're finished, a helpless, hopeless wreck,
 May you step back through your arsehole and break your fucking neck,
 You bastard!

Some of the licensed obscenities of soldiers may be grounded in a folk belief about the advisability of turning away any compliment with a deprecatory remark that might serve to ward off the evil eye. "Fuck you", "go fuck yourself", "get fucked", "fuck off" and "fucking" used as an adjectival modifier were derogatory usages that were voluminously used by some soldiers to deride or devalue anything of a serious nature that was said by anyone. Soldiers by the hazardous nature of their trade have a sharp interest in the techniques of averting danger by such devices, hence the carrying of talismans and good luck charms, the naming of weapons, aircraft and ships in affectionate easily identifiable and reassuring terms along with the performance of pre-combat rituals in the hope that "correct", carefully planned behavior will avert misfortune.³⁴ Psychologically the violent obscenity of many soldiers' jokes and songs also gives vent to their anger and sexual frustration. Certainly the moving thread that runs through all such material is the presentation of life as an ironic, comic and sometimes violently savage fantasy.

Folklore and Sexual Fantasy

The uninhibited environment of the services in World War 2 allowed not only the open expression of the sexual folklore of the era (revolving round such mythic figures of the erotic imagination as Tiger Lily, Lulu the Zulu, Eskimo Nell, Salome, Charlotte the Harlot, the Winnipeg Whore and Frau Wirtin) but it also encouraged the composition of many songs that directly reflected the troops' own immediate frustrations and obsessions. One of the most famous was "King Farouk". Sung widely throughout the British Eighth Army, to the tune of "Salaam el Malik" (the Egyptian national anthem), this expressed typical working class reactions towards a corrupt, inequitable regime as well as the sexual fantasies of a male sub-culture excited by the glamorous trappings of female royalty. Farouk as despotic tyrant symbolized the fact that all the power and wealth of Egypt rested in the hands of about five per cent of the population. His Queen, the youthful, shapely and attractive Farida, was an object of sexual fantasy in which she was depicted as being wholly subservient to the despot to the extent of practicing prostitution at his command, on condition that he received the money. She could thus be taken to represent the remaining 95 per cent of the population who owned practically nothing in the material sense, and who had virtually no hope of improving their station in life.

Oh we're all black bastards
 And we all love our king,
 Stanna shwya, kwise kateer,
 Mungarya, bardin.³⁵

Old King Farouk
 Put Farida up the chute³⁶
 Stanna shwya, pull your wire,³⁷
 King Farouk, bardin.

Queen Farida, Queen Farida,
 All the boys want to ride her.

But they never had a chance
 Their ambition to enhance;
 Stanna shwya, pull your wire,
 King Farouk, bardin.

The following variant was also widely sung.

King Farouk, the big black brute,³⁸
 Put Farida up the chute,
 Then went for a week
 To Skanderia³⁹ on the scoot;⁴⁰

Now the poor little Queen's
 Got another pup⁴¹ to wean,
 Kwise kateer, mungariya,
 Shufti kush, bardin.⁴²

This version then concludes with a direct reference to Farouk's pro-Axis sympathies.

And this song that you've heard
 Is the song the Gyppos sing,
 And they'd sing just the same
 If they'd Rommel for a King;⁴³
 Kwise kateer, Rommel dear,
 Kwise kateer, Rommel dear,
 Oh we're glad you've won the battle
 And we're so bucked you're here.

Then sing Sig Heil for Egypt's King,
 And to his feet your tributes bring;
 Kwise kateer, King Farouk,
 Kwise kateer, King Farouk,
 Oh you can't fuck Farida
 If you don't pay Farouk.

These disparaging references to Farouk as an over-weight pimp also place this song in the medieval tradition of flying or "contest-in-insult".⁴⁴ In lighter vein, British and American sources also composed songs about female stereotypes which they devised in order to satirise the behaviour of the civil populations of the areas they occupied. Some writers attribute "Venal Vera" to Quentin Reynolds, the famous Canadian war correspondent who was supposed to have composed it at the request of British security officials concerned about the espionage problem in Cairo, but a New Zealand informant states that he heard a version sung at a guest night in a Royal Air Force mess in Cairo by a subaltern in the 11th Hussars in 1937. Whatever the case, the song refers to the sexual licence of life in wartime Cairo and expresses some of the frontline soldier's contempt for the behaviour of the staff in rear areas.

They call me Venal Vera,
 I'm a lovely from Gezira;⁴⁵
 The Fuhrer pays me well for what I do;
 The order of the battle
 I obtained from last night's wrestle

On a golf course with a Brigadier from Q, ⁴⁶ etc.

A chain of doggerel-verse and topical-song writers generated images of the sort of female company that troops encountered in foreign territories. "Dirty Gertie from Bizerte" was composed by Pte William L. Russell at Camp Lee, Virginia. Numerous imitations included "Stella the Bella of Fedela", "Fanny of Trapani" and "Luscious Lena of Messina". ⁴⁷

Luscious Lena from Messina
Cutest thing you've ever seena;
All the G.I.s dream--a queena;
Oh that skin of sultry sheena!
When you go into Messina,
She will drink from your canteena;
She won't sock you on the beana,
But will purr like a machina;
When you walk through fields so greena
With this lovely, luscious Lena,
She will say: "No bambina..."
(Hard to keep this ending cleena).

Finally another Italian version, "The Belle of Capri" appeared in *The Stars and Stripes*. ⁴⁸

We've had Stella the Bella of Fedela,
And Gertie that wench from Bizerte,
And fat, filthy Fanny from far-off Trapani,
And other girls not so alerte.

Now the theme of this ditty concerns not a city
But yes -- you've guessed it -- a girl;
Though she's lousy with vermin and built like a Sherman, ⁴⁹
Her smile's full of mother-of-pearl.

Here's to Tina the belle signorina,
The toast of the Isle of Capri!
She brought fame and glory in song and story,
Her love, like her life, has been free.

While that husband is missing ⁵⁰
She doesn't waste kissing
On fishermen down by the sea;
For the G.I.s have landed
And now are commanded
By Tina the Belle of Capri.

The sexual excesses and the heat and filth of Egypt were critically described in several songs and recitations that were current in the British Eighth Army in World War 2. One of these was "The Anzac's Farewell to Egypt". This is probably of Australian origins in World War 1, but it was still being sung by New Zealand troops over 20 years later.

Land of heat and sweaty socks,
Sin and sand and tons of pox,

Streets of sorrow, streets of shame,
 Streets to which we give no name;
 Harlots, thieves and pestering wogs,
 Stinks and dirt and sneaking dogs,
 Flies that drive a man insane,
 Make him curse with oath profane:
 Blazing heat and aching feet,
 Gyppo guts and camel meat,
 Clouds of choking dust that blind,
 Drive a man clean off his mind;
 The Arab's heaven -- soldier's hell,
 Land of Bastards, fare thee well!

"The Soldier's Lament", another song that was current among New Zealand troops in the Middle East in World War 2, refers to "Susan and Tarzan and Lulu", well-known prostitutes in Cairo's brothel district, the Berkha.

Oh I've a sad story to tell you,
 A story you ain't heard before,
 Concerning my sad adventures
 At the time of the second Great War.

One night as I strolled down the Berkha,
 That horrible street of ill fame,
 Got to know all the dirty old harlots,
 Got to know them all by their names.

There was Susan and Tarzan and Lulu,
 They did it this way and that,
 They copied the gestures of animals,
 Even the dog and the cat.

They lay on their backs and their bellies,
 They charged ten ackers ⁵¹ a time;
 And if you had felousse in your pocket ⁵²
 You could get a good place in the line. ⁵³

Oh now I am fed up with Egypt,
 This land of sin, pox and shame,
 Where I lost my good reputation,
 And only the army's to blame.

Oh bury me out in the desert,
 Where the shite hawks ⁵⁴ may pick at my bones;
 With a bottle of Pilsener ⁵⁵ beside me,
 So I won't be so very alone.

Speculations and Conclusions

Not all the songs current among soldiers are testimonials to alienation, are resistant to authority or critical of political and military leadership. Some are pre-occupied with sexual fantasies, others are parodies and

facsimiles of the popular entertainment of the homeland which emphasizes patriotic and romantic sentiments in conformity to conventional mass media presentations of military life and whatever strategic objectives a particular military force might officially be pursuing. But co-existent with officially endorsed entertainment is a stream of potentially subversive criticism and dissent illustrated by the typical examples reproduced here. These can be analysed as improvisations suited to the wartime, frontier-style, male-dominant, community life of soldiers in camps and bivouacs. Because the heightening of group cohesion is valuable for military morale, any tendencies towards irreverence or idiosyncratic expression which their content exhibits are tolerated under the mantle of comic licence. This gives the folklore of soldiers (or for that matter of any comparable occupational group faced with hazardous and uncomfortable work conditions) an important integratory, social control function. The democratic soldier can accept the discomfort and personal risks involved in service for the State as long as he is permitted to grumble, protest and joke about his fate, to ridicule his leaders and to assert his essential autonomy and personal dignity, even at the cannon's mouth.

Alternatively, a socio-political analysis of the meaning of this material as protest would emphasise its oppositional qualities and its implicit challenge to the military order. As occupational folklore it does much more than strengthen group cohesion. "I Don't Want to be a Soldier" and "The Soldier's Prayer" are statements of working class solidarity against authority which contain the ultimate seeds of refusal of duty, rebellion and mutiny. If it is accepted that wartime military power in Western armies is a supportive part of the apparatus of Capitalism, then in a Marxist sense, the folklore of soldiers is more than an expressive form of resistance to the ideological hegemony of Capitalism; it has the power to confront it with explicit demands as New Zealand soldiers did with their appeal to their Prime Minister and American soldiers did with "Please Mr. Truman". As performance, its "use value" is no less than the preservation of the soldier's own life from the relentless forces of wartime military consumption.

Notes

1. Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1967), p.1.
2. Unless an alternative source is cited, the texts reproduced here are from the writer's field collection of military folklore compiled originally while serving as an infantry soldier in the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) in both the Pacific and Italian campaigns during World War 2.
3. H.D. Duncan, *Communication and Social Order* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.387.
4. Suzanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 201.
5. The text reproduced here is attributed to an infantry regiment in the Duke of Wellington's army during the Peninsula campaign. (See Julian Rathbone, *Joseph* (London: Michael Joseph, 1979), pp. 313-4.)
6. Sergeants recruiting for British regiments during this period would present each of their potential victims with a "King's shillings and treat them with liquor before marching them off to barracks.
7. "I don't want my testicles injured by a shot from a musket or a cannon".
8. It is included in a manuscript located in the Folklore Archive at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. It was compiled in 1943 by H.L. Goodwin while serving in the South Pacific as a Tech. Sgt in the U.S. Marine Corps.
- . This is one of the items in the Lansdale tapes located in the Archive of Folksong, Library of Congress. These were deposited by General Edwin Lansdale who headed the Senior Liaison Office team of advisory officials in Vietnam. The material consists of 160 songs by American personnel and others connected with the

Vietnam War during the 1960's. It is not clear whether the performer's source for this particular song is the U.S. Army or whether the song has been derived from a combined Australia-New Zealand infantry battalion which fought in Vietnam. The tune is "On Sunday I Walk out With a Soldier", a melody which was part of a revue called "The Passing Show of 1914" at the Hippodrome in London. (See John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *The Long Trail* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), p.67.)

10. Alternatively, Fiji, Port Said, Calais or any other two-syllable place name where soldiers might embark for return to their homeland.

11. Alternatively, New Zealand's shore.

12. Slang, female genitals or "cunt" hence a foolish, silly or stupid fellow.

13. Warrant Officer First Class, the senior rank attainable by non-commissioned officers in the Royal Air Force.

14. Alternatively, "Fuck all their daughters and fuck all their sons".

15. "As they ingratiate themselves with the Commanding Officer of the unit".

16. See William Wallrich, *Air Force Airs* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1952), p.28.

17. Source, Goodwin collection, *loc.cit.*

18. An island in the Solomons which was the scene of fierce fighting against a Japanese occupying force.

19. General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of the South-west Pacific area in World War 2.

20. The United Services Organisation, the chief source of organised stage and concert entertainments for U.S. troops in the field.

21. "Dogface" is a slang term for U.S. infantry soldier; Pelican is now obscure, but it probably refers to some other arm of the services.

22. Source, a collection of World War 2 songs compiled by Pete Seeger and located in the Folklore Archive, Library of Congress.

23. Unsourced ms., *ibid.*

24. From a collection of military folklore made by Agnes Nolan Underwood while teaching veterans at Russell Sage College after World War 2. These materials are now lodged with the Vietnam Veterans' Oral History and Folklore Project, Department of Anthropology, State University College, Buffalo.

25. These days they would use tape recorders. Although modern troops now have transistorised radios, cassette recorders and television services available for their entertainment, the experience of the Vietnam war indicates that folklore composition and transmission has been facilitated by this technology. Taped versions of folksong performances can give a song rapid, widespread currency. The folksong revival of the 1960's also encouraged many people to learn to play stringed instruments.

26. G.Legman, *The Horn Book* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1964), p.384.

27. Cf., *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773): Tony (singing), "We are the boys who make no noise where the thundering cannons roar"

28. Alternatively, "the Skinback Fusiliers" "Skinback" is probably a reference to the frequent inspections of the soldier's penis which were carried out by the medical staff as a check on venereal disease. Known as "short arm inspections" or "dangle parades", the experience was regarded as degrading by most men. According to G.Legman, *No Laughing Matter* (London: Granada Publishing, 1978), p.241 the forced showing and handling of an individual's penis is a humiliation that breaks him to the will of the accepting group or institution.

29. In actuality, Hitler may have been monorchic. See Walter C.Langer, *The Mind of Adolph Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

30. Cf. the following World War 1 text from the notebook of an Australian soldier, reproduced in Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1974), p.25.

Here's to the Kaiser, the son of a bitch,
May his balls drop off with the seven-year itch,
May his arse be pounded with a lump of leather
Till his arsehole can whistle Britannia for Ever".

31. "Carry your swag, or bedroll" while tramping about the countryside in search of work.

32. Skinning sheep that have died from mysterious causes.

33. Seven shillings, the daily rate of pay of the NZ infantry soldier in World War 2, roughly equivalent today to about \$US3.

34. See Agnes Nolan Underwood, "Folklore from G.I.Joe", *New York Folklore Quarterly*, 3 (1947), pp. 286-297.

35. Arabic nonsense which literally translated means "wait, very nice, food later".

36. Slang, "King Farouk will get Farida pregnant" (a sexual fantasy involving the voluptuous Farida).

37. Slang, "masturbate".

38. A reference to Farouk's gross physique.

39. Iskanderiya, the Arabic form for Alexandria.

40. Slang, "drinking and philandering".

41. The original expression was either "one" or "babe", but as Farouk's tendencies to listen to pro-Axis political factions became more apparent (and were to culminate in a battery of British artillery being trained on his palace) the word "pup" WAS substituted. It derives from the Arab insult "ibn kelb" meaning son of a dog, and it indicates the lack of esteem in which Farouk was held.

42. Arabic, "very good, food, show me cunt, later".

43. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, Commander of the Afrika Korps, who by a series of brilliant tank battles nearly succeeded in driving the British out of Africa in 1942.

44. Legman, *No Laughing Matter*, p. 899.

45. A popular club on an island in the Nile where the staff of the British command used to disport themselves.

46. Q refers to the quartermastering section of the British army command.
47. *The Stars and Stripes Weekly* , African ed, Vol 1, No 38, August 28, 1943, p. 4.
48. Vol 1, No 80, February 17, 1944, p.2.
49. A Sherman tank, the standard infantry support tank with which the 5th U.S. Army was equipped.
50. The husbands and fiancés of many Italian girls were either missing in action, being held prisoners of war, or were killed or wounded.
51. Slang, "ten piastres", equivalent to about one shilling in 1940.
52. Arabic, "money in your pocket"
53. You could buy a good position for yourself in the queue which inevitably formed outside brothels patronized by large numbers *of* troops.
54. The Indian Whistling Kite, a large black bird that scavenged over most areas of Egypt and India.
55. A good quality light ale.
56. See Jose E.Limon, "Western Marxism and Folklore: A Critical Introduction" *Journal of American Folklore*, 96 (1983), p.50.